

Message Text

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17

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 INR-07 L-03 ACDA-05

NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-06 TRSE-00

SAJ-01 MC-02 NSC-05 EB-07 ERDA-05 COME-00 /077 W

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R 261700Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4755

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

USAREUR

CINCUSAFE

CDR 4TH TRANS BDE OBERURSEL GER

CDR USATTGE RADM NE//AEUIR-TM//

MSC WASHDC

DIA WASHDC

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USNMR SHAPE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MMOL, MARR, NATO, BE, US

SUBJECT: RESTRICTIONS ON USE OF ZEEBRUGGE FOR MUNITIONS SHIPMENTS

REF: BRUSSELS 7195

SUMMARY: IN ABSENCE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS ON ISSUE AT
TECHNICAL LEVEL, WE MADE DEMARCHE TO BELGIAN GOVERNMENT ON
AUG 26. END SUMMARY.

1. NAVAL ATTACHE HAS EXPLORED PROPOSED REDUCTIONS IN USE

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OF ZEEBRUGGE FOR MUNITIONS SHIPMENTS WITH PORT AUTHORITY

(BRUGGE/ZEEBRUGGE MBZI COUNCIL). HE WAS INFORMED THAT TWO FACTORS WERE BEHIND DECISION TO IMPOSE FORTHCOMING RESTRICTIONS: (A) ABSENCE OF ANY WRITTEN RESTRICTIONS TO DATE LIMITING QUANTITY OF AMMO HANDLED OR NUMBER OF AMMO SHIPS LOCATED IN ZEEBRUGGE AT THE SAME TIME. PORT AUTHORITY REP NOTED THAT AT ONE TIME IN EARLY SUMMER 1975, SEVEN SHIPS WERE HANDLING AMMO AT THE SAME TIME. WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN NO ACCIDENTS SO FAR, AUTHORITIES BELIEVE THAT ZEEBRUGGE POPULATION IS EXPOSED TO SEVERE DANGER. THEY FURTHER CITED EXPLOSION ABOARD AN AMMO TRAIN DESTINED FOR ZEEBRUGGE AS EXAMPLE.) (B) WHILE PORT AUTHORITY HAS, OF COURSE, BEEN AWARE OF AMMO HANDLING IN PORT, IT HAS ONLY RECENTLY BEEN AWARE OF THE QUANTITIES INVOLVED AND THE DANGER THESE POSE TO THE LOCAL POPULATION. REPRESENTATIVES OF PORT AUTHORITY INDICATED THAT NOVEMBER 25 DATE FOR IMPOSITION OF NEW RESTRICTIONS MIGHT BE ADJUSTED SOMEWHAT UPON APPROPRIATE REQUEST.

2. WE MADE DEMARCHE TO FOREIGN MINISTRY AUGUST 26, LEFT AIDE MEMOIRE SETTING FORTH SITUATION AND PROBLEM, AND OFFERED TO BRING IN US MUNITIONS HANDLING EXPERTS FOR TECHNICAL DISCUSSIONS WITH PORT AUTHORITY EXPERTS ON SAFETY QUESTIONS. WE STRESSED URGENCY DUE TO LEAD TIME REQUIRED IN ESTABLISHING SHIPPING SCHEDULES. INITIAL FOREIGN MINISTRY REACTION WAS CONCERN OVER EFFECT OF PROPOSED REGULATIONS ON NATO FORCES. AT THE SAME TIME, FOREIGN MINISTRY NOTED THAT IF SAFETY WERE THE REAL ISSUE, IT WOULD BE POLITICALLY DIFFICULT FOR ANYONE TO OVERRIDE EXPERT OPINION. WE REPEATED OUR OFFER OF US TECHNICAL EXPERTS TO EXAMINE SAFETY QUESTION WITH BELGIAN EXPERTS. RENNER

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